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SUBJECT: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SOMALIA: PROSPECTS FOR PEACE

¶1. Summary: Recent developments in Somalia have improved the prospect for peace, however the process remains vulnerable, and the pressing humanitarian crisis demands immediate international attention. The signing of the Aden Declaration and subsequent convening of the Parliament are important steps on the long road to peace. Many problems remain however, including a violent political power struggle and extremist activity in Mogadishu, a severe drought and famine, and violent clashes over scarce water, land, and grazing rights. Piracy continues to impede humanitarian relief efforts, and the overall lack of security threatens to derail the peace process. The international community is needed to address security concerns, enforce the arms embargo, combat piracy, and continue humanitarian relief efforts as 1.7 million people are facing starvation. End Summary.

¶2. In his March 10 briefing to the United Nations Security Council, Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) Francois Fall noted a number of positive developments that improved the prospect for peace and reconciliation in Somalia. On January 5, President Abdullahi Yusef Ahmed and Speaker Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden signed the Aden Declaration, agreeing to end their differences, abide by the Transitional Federal Charter, and hold a meeting of the Transitional Federal Parliament, for whose convening in Baidoa an official announcement was made on January 30. The President, the Speaker, and Prime Minister Gedi issued a Memorandum of Understanding in which they agreed to work together to implement the Aden Declaration.

¶3. The opening of the session of Parliament took place on February 26, 2006, attended by 211 of the 275 Members. SRSG Fall acknowledged a great deal of support from the international community. At the session, President Yusef outlined an agenda which included issues related to national security and confidence building; support for international agreements and treaties, and internal revenue generation. At the request of the President, the members adjourned to conduct informal consultations, and when Parliament reconvened on March 6th, 230 members were in attendance. Fall opined that the opening session had the potential to put Somalia's political process on track; however collective efforts of the international community were needed to address the priority issues facing the country -- national security, reconciliation, revenue collection, and the establishment of basic social services for the population.

Mogadishu

¶4. SRSG Fall reported that increased tensions in Mogadishu were the most serious security concern presently facing Somalia. Groups of faction leaders and prominent businessmen formed the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism⁸ with the stated goal of restoring peace and fighting international terrorism by eliminating those they considered foreign terrorists and their supporters.⁸ Between February 18th and 20th, confrontations between this

&Alliance8 and the Islamic Shariah Court militias resulted in heavy loss of life, including civilians. According to Fall, there has been an increase in extremist activity, including assassinations, and the power struggle in Mogadishu has had serious political and security implications. In addition to clan and sub-clan disputes, Fall noted there remained drought-related clashes over scarce water, land, and grazing rights.

Other Issues:

¶15. SRSG Fall highlighted the concern over Somali piracy, with attacks inhibiting international relief efforts, and noting that over 50 vessels were attacked in 2005. Trafficking in persons remains an issue, as well as abandonments and drownings at sea. The current drought in the region is the most serious in a decade, according to Fall, with 1.7 million Somalis in need of urgent humanitarian assistance, especially in Southern Somalia where malnutrition rates exceed 20 percent. The Donor community has ensured funding for 66 percent of this need, but there remains an estimated shortfall of 20,000 metric tons of food, at a projected cost of \$15 million USD.

¶16. Fall concluded by noting that the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs) must find ways to address these issues within the framework of a national security and stability plan (NSSP), and a national Demobilization, Disarmament, and Rehabilitation (DDR) plan. The Inter Governmental Agency on Development (IGAD) is scheduled to meet on March 17 - 18, followed by a summit in support of the peace process in Nairobi on March 20. The purpose of these meetings is to review the situation in Somalia, and recommend concrete measures to support the political process.

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Intervention:

¶17. At the conclusion of Fall,s presentation, Qatari Ambassador Al-Nasser offered a brief intervention in his capacity as the new Chair of the Somalia Sanctions Committee on the report of the Monitoring Group of Somalia. The Group,s report noted that despite the embargo, violations and the resulting militarization of Somalia continue, largely due to three groups: the Transitional Federal Government (TFG); the Mogadishu-based opposition groups; and the militant fundamentalists. There is increasing evidence Member States are involved in violations of the arms embargo as well: Yemen has admitted involvement in arms shipments to Somalia, while Ethiopia has denied involvement despite increasing evidence to the contrary. In reference to the AU Summit in January, the Group noted that the AU had adopted a resolution calling for the Security Council to consider a waiver of the arms embargo to allow for the deployment of an AU peace support mission. The Group opined that an exemption to the AU mission would cause further hostility and undermine ongoing peace efforts.

¶18. Of continuing concern to the Group are the ongoing acts of piracy. The Chair mentioned Committee members, questions about the involvement of a U.S.-based company (TopCat) in combating this problem, and that the U.S. government was looking into the matter and did not have any affiliation with the company. The Qatari PermRep further noted the piracy was occurring in international waters, and was the responsibility of the International Maritime Organizations (IMO). The 24th session of the IMO Assembly had adopted a resolution in January on &piracy and armed robbery against ships in waters off the coast of Somalia8 which had been submitted to the UN for consideration.

Member Comments of Note:

¶19. Members of the Council commented on the SRSG briefing, raising specific issues of concern. All Members supported a

PRST, with the only criticism from some being that the draft was not strong enough, and did not go far enough. The Council also universally endorsed the urgent need for an NSSP.

¶10. Most Members, as well as the SRSG, agreed the lack of security was the overriding concern and the most pressing issue in Somalia. Ambassador Mahiga of Tanzania noted its negative effect on the fragile human situation.⁸ In his view, the international community was not moving fast enough, and the Council should demand concrete recommendations in the next Secretary General's Report -- a view endorsed by Ambassador de Rivero of Peru. Greek Ambassador Vassilakis, cautiously optimistic in regard to the Aden Declaration and subsequent meeting of Parliament, noted the need to address security concerns, enforcement of the arms embargo, piracy, and the ongoing problems in Mogadishu. France and the UK both voiced their concern over the tenuous security situation noting the looming specter of warlords.⁸ Specific trouble spots were highlighted) most notably Mogadishu, where Ambassador Apenteng of Ghana addressed the increase in terrorism, as well as the increase in extremism, both there and in lower Juba. Ambassador Al-Nasser noted that conditions in Somalia provided fertile ground for terrorism⁸) a view shared by the Slovakian PermRep.

Political Progress/NSSP

¶11. Ambassador Al-Nasser noted his country was disheartened⁸ at the deteriorating situation in a sister Arab state, and by the relative neglect of the international community. The Danish Representative noted that it was difficult to be optimistic about the prospects for peace given the failure of 14 prior peace initiatives. He welcomed AU and IGAD initiatives, which he stated must be coordinated with TFI,s. U.K. Representative Johnston agreed that the establishment of an NSSP was critical so the containment of the militias can be addressed. Russian Representative Dolgov spoke in support of the need to insure the inclusive nature of the political process. Argentinean Representative Mayoral acknowledged the Somalis had taken an important first step towards peace, but stated that there must be an NSSP and improvement of the human situation.

IGAD/AU Peace support Operations: Waiver of the Arms Embargo

¶12. Council Members were divided on the issue of a waiver of the arms embargo for the AU. While many, including the SRSG and Somalia Monitoring Group were opposed, Ambassador Ikouebe of Congo voiced his hope that the AU would have greater involvement, and noted specific support for a waiver. Ghana

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and Japan were willing to consider a waiver, but only after an NSSP was in place. The Russian PermRep went further, stating a waiver of the arms embargo for the AU had already been discussed, and that it would be considered in the Security Council only when the Council received a detailed plan from the AU and IGAD) a plan worked out with the TFI,s, and in conjunction with an NSSP. Tanzanian PermRep Mahiga was willing to consider a waiver &with due safeguards; ⁸ stating that the AU and IGAD would be able to provide a detailed peace plan &in due course.⁸

Humanitarian Conditions

¶13. All were in agreement that the deteriorating humanitarian conditions needed to be addressed by the international community, with the Chinese appealing to Somali leaders to improve the security situation, and permit desperately needed relief efforts access. In this context the ongoing problem of piracy was raised, and its significant impact on humanitarian relief efforts. The Japanese Ambassador emphasized that safety and security were mandatory for providers of assistance. Ambassador Apenteng of Ghana

argued that more attention should be paid to the drought situation, while the Peruvian PermRep challenged the Security Council to ensure the situation of drought and famine did not deteriorate further. He suggested that Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Egeland brief the Council on how to get humanitarian aid into the country, and noted that although he supported it, the PRST was not enough.

Ambassador Mayoral of Argentina stated that the Somali government must address the immediate needs of the people, voicing concern over the drought, and that 1.7 million people are facing starvation.

Conclusion:

¶14. In response to Member comments, SRSG Fall noted that in his view, all issues raised by Council Members came down to security, and restoring State authority throughout the country. Once established, all other issues could be resolved. Necessary reconciliation among faction leaders must go down to the district level. He added that major figures are now talking, and trust is gradually being established. He acknowledged growing extremism is a problem that initially kept some ministers away from Baidoa, &but they are there now.⁸ Islamists still feel they are not adequately represented, and continue to resort to violence. A national police unit has been formed (trained in Uganda) and a police academy established in Puntland. Still, there remains a problem of access to those in greatest need. The AU, IGAD and TFG must be encouraged by the international community to move the process forward. Progress has been made.
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